



**NJ Office of the Attorney General  
Juvenile Justice Commission  
Gang Management Unit**

## Gang Awareness Guide

# Recognize the Signs



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[www.njgangfree.org](http://www.njgangfree.org)

NJ OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL • JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION

# Gang Awareness Guide

The New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission (JJJC) understands that gangs and gang related activities impact every community in our State. The JJJC works with schools, community organizations and other law enforcement agencies to combat juvenile street gangs and help young people succeed.

The JJC has responded with a comprehensive program that addresses youth gangs at all levels. With funding from the NJ Department of Education, the JJC has developed a cutting-edge education curriculum, entitled Phoenix, that corresponds with the NJ Core Curriculum Standards.

This course can be tailored for youth in secure and residential programs, as well as county-operated detention centers and community-based programs. The workbook-based lessons provide structure and support, and clearly identify the progress of participants. The most important goal of the curriculum is the development of self-efficacy skills, thereby allowing juveniles to understand how to react to risky situations, and to think through their actions and responses to avoid future gang involvement.

To expand its reach, the JJC is forming partnerships with communities to train others in the Phoenix curriculum. The JJC is also coordinating with the county offices of probation and local police departments, to build “safety nets” of resources for youth in the community.

Experienced JJC staff are available to conduct workshops.

One-day training sessions can be adapted to meet an audience's specific needs and information level. It can also be expanded to provide more in depth training.

For more information, please contact a member of the

JJC's Gang Management Unit:

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# Recognize the Signs

## I General Warning Signs

- Admits membership
- Change of behavior or defiant behavior
- Grades drop/tuancy
- New “friends”
- Calls from unknown people
- Unexplained money and jewelry
- Slang
- Obsession with certain colors and sports teams apparel
- Flashing signs
- Graffiti on books and walls
- Nicknames and street names
- Evidence of drug abuse

Gang members communicate in many different ways. Speech is the most obvious; however, gang members also make use of nonverbal methods of exchanging thoughts. Graffiti, hand signs, colors, and tattoos are indicators of gang affiliation.

Gang members have their own language, which contains phrases, hand signs, tattoos, markings and graffiti. As a parent, you may not recognize them right away. The items listed as Identifiers in this booklet include types of clothing young people might wear, tattoos and other markings. The items listed as Phrases are expressions young people might say to each other or write on their school notebooks.

that follow provide you with vivid descriptions that you can use to identify gang activity. If you spot any of these signs, there are professionals available to help you.

There are approximately **2,300 gang members** under the age of 15 in New Jersey. Children as young as second and third grade have known gang affiliations. In fact, **46 percent of gang-related incidents** occur on school property.

## What can parents do to prevent their children from joining a gang?

- Develop open and frequent communication with your children.
- Encourage children to become involved in athletics and other health-oriented activities to establish a sense of belonging.
- Monitor/limit children’s exposure to violence contained in television, music, and video games.
- Cultivate respect for others’ property and pride in community.
- Know who your children are spending time with.
- Don’t let children stay out late or spend a lot of time unsupervised in the street.
- Become involved in your child’s education and in your community.

Street gangs are targeting young people at an earlier and earlier age. It is critical that you be able to recognize the signs of gang involvement. This booklet is designed to help parents, teachers, and community members spot gang activity in their families, schools and communities. The pages

## Why do kids join gangs?

Each case is individual, but some reasons include:

- Security, protection and a sense of belonging
- Lack of family, community, or youth support system (too much unsupervised time)
- Sense of status or respect
- Living in a gang infested community or having family members in a gang
- Low self-esteem
- Financial opportunities (i.e. profits from drug distribution and other illegal activities)
- Peer pressure
- Thrill seeking
- Media glorifying violence



# Recognize the Signs

## bloods

Originally from Los Angeles, the Bloods are one of the largest associations of street gangs in the United States. These extremely violent and aggressive street gangs, referred to as sets, have adopted a common gang philosophy. Members use violence to protect and expand their drug distribution. The sets share a comprehensive philosophy, expressed in an oath, a prayer, a song, a motto, a concept of war, and 31 common rules including an initiation, where a new member must withstand 31 seconds of beating or sexual relations.

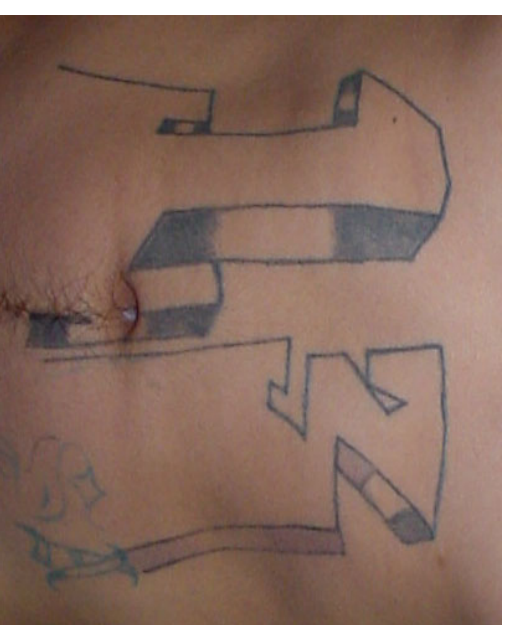
### blood identifiers

- Colors red, black, brown and pink
- B's up (B), C's Down (C)
- MOB = Member of Bloods
- Dog paws made up of three dots
- CK Crip Killa
- 031 / 021
- Red, black, brown or pink bandanas and wave caps



### blood phrases

- Blatt Blatt
- Greetings: "What dat red be like?"
- Referred to each other as dogs
- DAMU = Brother/Blood
- DAMUETTE = Sister Bloodettes Ruby Red
- Blood Love
- What's popping?



Courtesy of Carlos Diaz



# Recognize the Signs

## ms 13

Originating in Los Angeles, MS 13 is one of the most violent street gangs in the United States. Members smuggle and distribute illicit drugs and are extremely violent.

La Mara Salvatrucha  
MS X3 • MS 13

### ms 13 identifiers

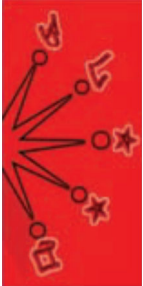
- Heavily tattooed
- Typical latin gang tattoos
- “Heavy Metal” tattoos
- Blue and black bandanas

### ms 13 phrases

- “La Mara” stands for Gangs
- “Salva” stands for Salvadorian
- “Trucha” stands for “look out”
- EME ESE stands for MS
- Locotes
- Cliques



Courtesy of Carlos Diaz



# Recognize the Signs

## crips

Originally from Los Angeles, the Crips are an organization of aggressive and brutal gang members who are heavily involved in the drug trade. Throughout the 1980's and 1990's the Crips developed intricate networks and a respected reputation with other gangs across America. Crip gangs are well established across the United States.



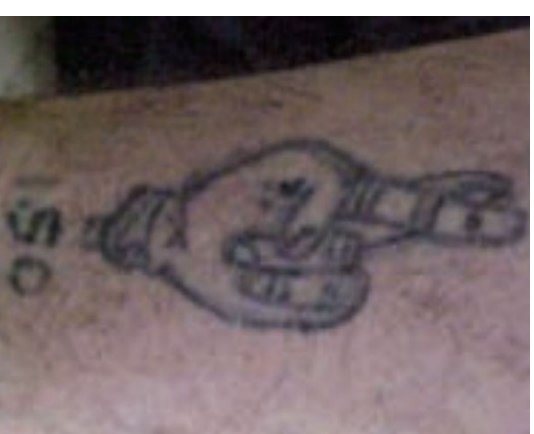
### crips identifiers

- Colors blue, gray, orange and purple
- 6 Pointed Star of David
- C's up (☿), B's down (♄)
- Blue, gray, orange or purple bandanas or wave caps
- Crip Walks
- B's crossed out



### crips phrases

- BK Blood Killa
- Loc (Love only crips)
- C-Ya
- Slobs (Derogatory Bloods)
- C's Up Cuzz
- What's Crackacking?
- Refer each other as cousins



# Recognize the Signs

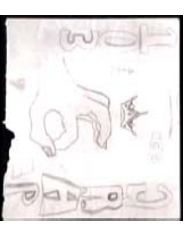
## ñeta

Ñeta originated in the prisons of Puerto Rico and is an extremely violent gang. The group was formed to address prisoners' rights issues in the Puerto Rican prison system. In the United States, Ñeta chapters exist inside and outside of prison.

Association for  
the Rights of  
the Incarcerated  
ÑETA

### ñeta Identifiers

- The colors black, red, white and blue
- The term 150%
- Tattoo with the numbers 1.50
- Depicting shackles and handcuffs
- Beads
- Bandanas



### ñeta phrases

- DeCorazon
- Primos
- Insectos



# Recognize the Signs

## latin kings

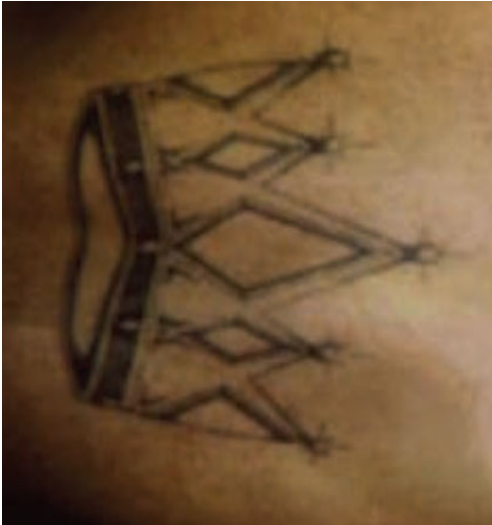
Originally from Chicago, the Latin Kings are extremely violent and a well organized gang. The gang is active in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Its main source of income is from the distribution of drugs and robbery.

### latin kings identifiers

- Colors black and gold
- 3 or 5 pointed crowns
- Eyebrows cut to form five points
- Pittsburgh sports team apparel
- Yellow and black bandanas, beads or wave caps

### latin kings phrases

- Kingism
- Pee Wee King (for those under 18)
- ADR Amor de rey (Love of the king)
- 360° whole, complete and unbreakable



Courtesy of Andy Grascia



Courtesy of Andy Grascia